

Classroom building plan passes committee

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OLYMPIA — On a unanimous vote, a House committee approved a plan to build some 2,000 new classrooms at schools around the state by tapping lottery funds.

The House Capital Budget Committee voted 13-0 this morning in favor of a proposal to sell \$700 million in bonds to build classrooms for the kindergarten through Grade 3 classes that will be downsized as part of efforts to improve public schools. Smaller class sizes in those grades is one of the goals for meeting a state Supreme Court order to meet constitutional requirements for education.

HB 2797 would take \$50 million in state lottery proceeds each year to pay off the bonds. The lottery is a steady and dependable source of money to pay off bonds, Committee Chairman Hans Dunshee said. Selling the bonds would allow the state to build the extra classrooms by the 2017-18 school year, when the classroom size reductions are scheduled to be in place, he said.

There would be no local match required from school districts, he said. The districts would apply to the state Superintendent of Public Instruction office to receive the money.

“We’re not doing this because the court told us,” Dunshee said. “This is what we want to do. This is what we ought to do.”